

# Bringing home the shots



Photojournalist Greg Drezdson isn't interested in simply showing someone a black-and-white paper version of a baseball game; rather, he aims to stop action frame by frame and throw the subjects of his photographs into the viewer's lap.

Drezdson, currently team photographer for the Cleveland Indians, was lured by the excitement and glamour of photography from an early age.

"In grade school, I thought it would be really neat to have a darkroom in the basement of my house and print and develop my own pictures," he said. "I started out using my grandma's camera, which was a Kodak Instamatic. I took pictures of my family or school friends and events, and then I took my friends down to the darkroom so they could learn ... and be impressed."

He discovered in high school that he could combine two things he loved by taking pictures at girls' softball tournaments. "I would travel

with the team and take the girls' photos. I don't know a better way for a kid to have fun; it was sports and girls every night!"

He didn't spend much time working on his high school newspaper or yearbook. This was only because Drezdson already was working as a photographer-stringer for several daily newspapers in his hometown of Oak Park, Ill. However, he acted as an unofficial mentor and tutor to his peers, he says.



Southern Illinois University's Pie Walker gets an extra edge on an Eastern Illinois University player.

Since then, Drezdson's style has evolved and changed. He began shooting black-and-white film, worked in color as a newspaper photographer, and then returned to working with the simplicity and power of light and shadow as a sports photographer.

"Everybody gets used to seeing everything in color, and black-and-

white photographs have a style all their own," he says. "It's much more than a style, though. It has an aura to it. You can take a color photograph and turn it into a black-and-white one, and it takes on a whole new look. Black-and-white photography is simply about how the light and shadows meet."

For the past five seasons, Drezdson has worked for the Indians, and was team photographer for the Cleveland Browns prior to the team's moving to

## Drezdson's TOP 10 PHOTO TIPS

### No. 10 Have patience

The more patient you are, the more shots you will get.

### No. 9 Concentrate

If you get distracted, you could miss a great shot. Minimize distractions.

### No. 8 Keep it simple

Watch the subject in relation to the background. Is the picture saying what you want it to say or is it too busy?

### No. 7 Get the shot!

If you have to climb on top of a roof or lay on the ground, do it. If you want to shoot the action, you have to be where the action is.

### No. 6 Practice, Practice, Practice

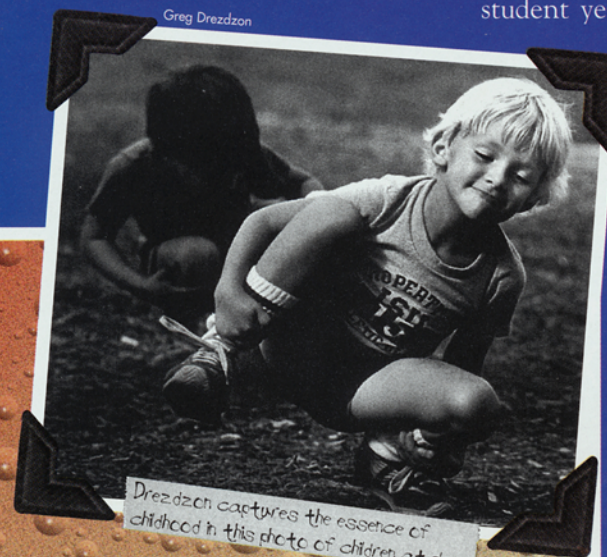
Try different styles; manipulate aperture and focus. For a simple effect, shoot with the maximum aperture, the largest F-stop available. No depth of field.

### No. 5 Maintain sharpness

Use the slowest speed film to minimize grain. Grain distracts from what you are photographing.

Photographers Press Association monthly clip contest numerous times, having also won awards in Pro Football Hall of Fame contests.

He currently owns and maintains a commercial photography business,



Drezdson captures the essence of childhood in this photo of children at play.

### No. 4 Use natural light

If you must use a flash, attach a reflector card to the flash and "bounce" the light off the ceiling, this diffuses some of the light away from the subject. You can fill in with natural light by shooting at a slower shutter speed, such as at a 30th of a second.

### No. 3 Watch out for high-tech trade-offs

Use the available computer software (Photoshop) to sharpen and touch up photos, but use restraint. If you distort the picture too much, you've manipulated reality, and that defeats the purpose of photography.

### No. 2 Shoot what you like

The computer stuff and school work is fine, but you need hands-on experience using film. The thing to do is buy a camera and just start using it.

### No. 1 Get a broad-based education

To be a great photographer, you must be good at many things and experience many things in life. Don't limit yourself in school to photography courses; instead, take a variety of arts, sciences and anything you like. The more you know, the further you will go!

staff photographer for the *Daily Egyptian*, the student newspaper for Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, where he received a bachelor's degree in journalism. He also worked during college for the *Obelisk II* student yearbook, covering sports and features.

Drezdson says the key to success in photography of any kind is to develop a solid base of knowledge in photography, and to combine that with a varied experience in every subject available, from the earliest age possible.

"The more you know, the more you experience, the better your pictures will be," he says. "Get a well-rounded education. If you keep your thinking too narrow, too focused, you will lose creativity and miss things in life."

He also boasts of several prestigious internships while in school, which added to his credibility once he was looking for a professional job. He worked as an intern for *Newsday* on Long Island, for the *Southern Illinoisan* and the *Associated Press*.

Today, he draws from his own varied past, and plans photographs (even action shots) through careful composition. He looks for unique angles and for different ways of shooting, he says.

"What I try and do as much as possible is be certain my background is clean. I want to make sure

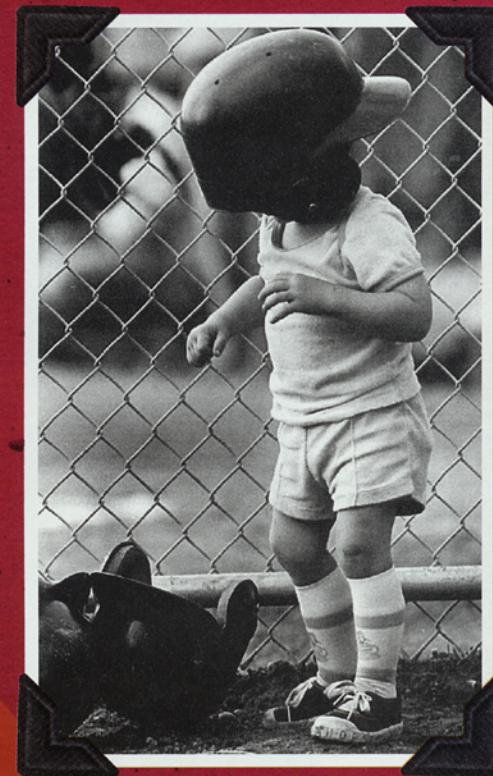
that you see what I am shooting, and that it stands out clearly from the background. That way, the audience doesn't have to guess what I'm trying to convey."

Oftentimes, Drezdson's photography becomes art, especially in-between action shots.

"Over the weekend, for example, I

spent some time taking photos of the deck circle that shows the stadium, empty, in its natural environment. That's not second-base action, mind you; that's art."

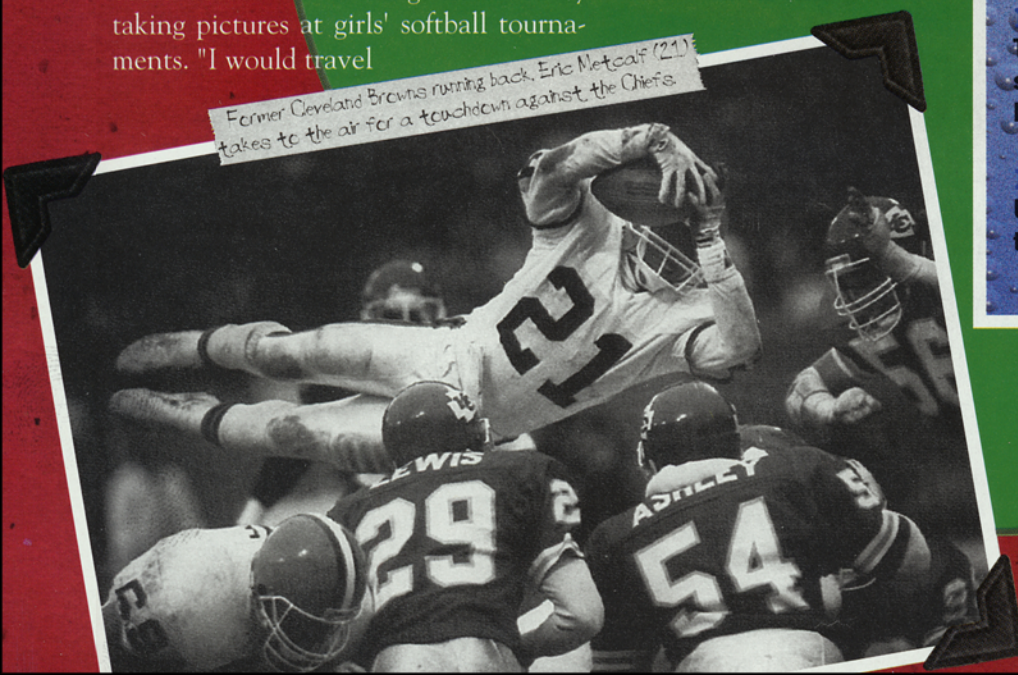
Whether the result is "art" or a more technical action shot, Drezdson says he plans the composition to be simple, and then manipulates his stance and the camera to bring about a unique angle.



Tim Meyer tries on his sister's team's batting helmet, but finds that he's still too young for the big leagues.

"A good action shot is the result of being at the right place at the right time," he says. "But a lot of it has to do with anticipating what is going to happen. You have to be looking at the scoreboard, seeing who gets the ball, knowing about batters and where they hit. You have to understand the game, anticipate the shot and add in a little luck. Lots of things come into play, so to speak. And sometimes, you hit a home run."

—Janet Doggett



Former Cleveland Browns running back Eric Metcalfe (21) takes to the air for a touchdown against the Chiefs.